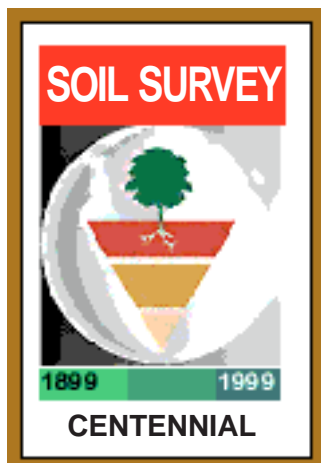


CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in California*

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Davis, California



This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the National Soil Survey Program!

State Soil Scientist Eric Vinson digs into the past with a look back and contemplates new horizons for the soil program in the future.

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Anthropogenic Soil Tour Draws Experts from Around the World

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Soil Survey Saves a Life in the Santa Monica Mountains!

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MEET YOUR CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE



Bert Cabalsi, Asian/Pacific American Emphasis Program Manager

Led a very successful student-hiring initiative last summer. Attended the first Annual Asian/Pacific American Special Emphasis Program Training Conference in November with Jolene Lau and several other California employees. *"Chief Pearlie Reed's attendance strongly supported the conference."*

Don Nielsen, Veteran Emphasis Program Manager

Eighty of our 317 NRCS employees are veterans. Their statistics: 58 GS-11 and above, 11 GS-9, and the rest GS-8 and below; several are Hispanic, black, or Asian/Pacific Islander. *"Overall the veterans' grade levels are excellent; many of the higher grade levels are occupied by long-term, older employees, while the lower grade levels have younger, short-term employees who are mostly moving up."*

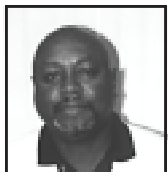


Gwendolyn Gilbert, Federal Women's Program Manager

The Federal Women's Program provides a forum for all NRCS employees in California. Focusing on women, but providing pertinent employment information and help for all employees, regardless of gender. *"I plan to focus on improving the number of women employed by NRCS, currently the most underrepresented group. What can you do? Work with me, educate yourself about women's issues, and communicate this knowledge to other employees."*

Tish Espinosa, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

Planning the June training conference of the National Organization of Hispanic NRCS Employees, to be held in Las Vegas. *"As the new HEPM, I would like to increase the number of Hispanics in our agency by making Hispanic employees more visible in high schools, universities, and the community. I also want to showcase the great work that is being done with the Hispanic community through a web site that Carmen Ortiz is helping to set up."*

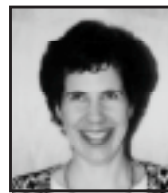


Ed Johnson, Black Emphasis Program Manager

Recently attended the annual conference for Black NRCS employees in Little Rock, Arkansas. *"I am active in the Interagency Black Employment Program Council and helped organize this year's banquet."*

Brenda Sanden, Disability Emphasis Program Manager

Presented several educational programs during National Disability Awareness Month in October. Provided employees with a bulletin giving thought-provoking statements on disability, designed to foster enlightened attitudes. Twice presented "My Year as a Blind Person." *"This year I plan to attend a national conference in June and work with Ron Teroni of the Secretary's Advisory Committee."*



Linda Marianito, American Indian Emphasis Program Manager

Attended the annual American Indian/Alaska Native NRCS Employees Association meeting in Reno. Developed a communication network with our American Indian employees and participated in the November Harmony Workshop reaching over 75 NRCS employees. Will help to create a newsletter and maintain this page. *"We plan to be more active in the recruitment process by building a better relationship with the state management team and the Human Resources Section. I am currently analyzing our workforce to develop a strategy for its future, and considering opportunities for NRCS service to American Indian tribes."*

Questions, comments, and contributions may be forwarded to:

Current Developments

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From My Viewpoint...

SOIL SURVEY CELEBRATES 100TH YEAR

By

Eric Vinson, State Soil Scientist, SO

The soil survey of the United States began in 1899. The 100th anniversary is time to reflect on past achievements, but it is also a time to look to a future of even greater understanding of the soil as a natural resource. In 1899, soil surveys of the USDA began in four areas: the Pecos Valley of New Mexico, the Salt Lake Valley of Utah, The Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and Cecil County, Maryland. These surveys investigated the soils for agricultural expansion and the suitability for crops.

The first soil maps were hand drawn using a plane table. Aerial photographs replaced the need for this equipment and became the standard base maps for soil surveys 50 years after the soil survey began. Today we still use aerial photographs in our field work but recompile them onto Digital Orthophotography for use as the published base maps and use in Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Basic to soil surveys is the highly trained professional field soil scientist, who has finely honed skills to observe and record soil properties and to predict behavior for various uses. These folks are to be admired and applauded. Soil survey can be a lonely and strenuous profession but the dedicated soil scientist still enjoys it. Many months are spent in the field alone fighting the elements of heat and cold, wind and dust, and snakes, ticks and gnats. I wouldn't change it for the world.

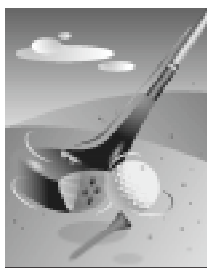
Soil survey information is valuable as a basis for natural resource management and legislation. Soil survey is a collection of descriptions, analysis, maps, and interpretations of a very complex natural system. Field soil scientists quickly learn that great variation in soils can occur within short distances. The experienced soil scientist learns to design map units that express that variability in the landscape. Field procedures

progressed into standard ways of mapping and describing soils to build and maintain nationally consistent information. This has provided a means to transfer information from one site to another. What we learn in one soil area can be transferred to another. Today digital soil information is combined with other data layers in GIS systems.

Soil is vital to all life on earth. Soil survey information is intended for many different users. To avoid costly mistakes and to protect and sustain the resource, users should consider the soil first in all land use decisions. Hats off to our Engineers and Soil and Range Conservationists who use the soil information in assisting our customers in proper planning.

As we move into the 21st century there is lots of work to be done. There are 7.2 million acres of private land within California that is unsurveyed. This year we have developed an aggressive plan to complete the fieldwork by 2004. This plan includes adding additional field soil scientists and creating a new Soil Survey GIS Specialist position. This person will use and develop new technologies to help enhance and accelerate the soil survey program. I am very excited about this. The state has 20 million acres that are in need of updating. These areas were surveyed in the 50's and 60's and have experienced many changes such as land leveling, draining and flooding, deep ripping, irrigation for 40 plus years, and urbanization, to name a few. These activities have altered the soil properties that need to be captured in our soil database.

I am excited about the future. Many opportunities and challenges await us. With the support of the dedicated soil scientists and employees in the NRCS and our cooperators, we can take advantage of these opportunities and solve the challenges to our benefit. I look forward to working with you all.



WATER CONSERVATION

BETTER THAN PAR —————●●●●●●●●

By

Emmett Cartier, Urban Conservationist, San Francisco UO

NRCS Soil Conservation Technician **Bob Dunkle**, from the San Jacinto Field Office, recently spent some time on the green (working not golfing) as he helped the San Francisco Urban Team with Irrigation Water Management for Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica. The course is owned and operated by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.

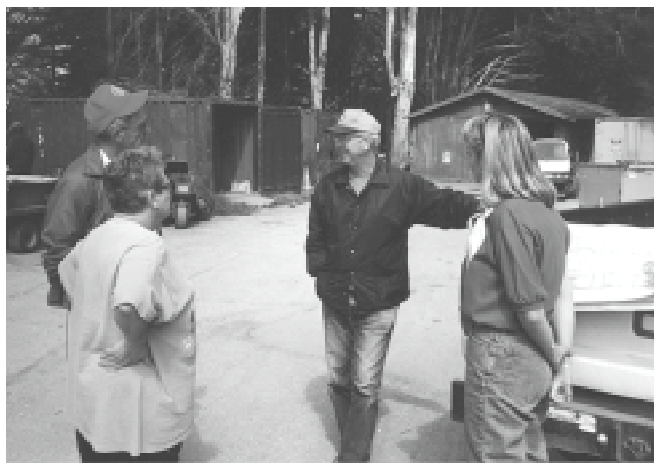
Course Superintendent **John Farley** asked for the assistance and arranged golf play around the project. He was interested not only in water conservation, but also savings in labor costs, applications for new technology, and pest management.

As part of the irrigation system evaluation, **Bob Dunkle** and Earth Team Volunteer **Linda Dunkle** first examined the climate, soils, and other site factors. These factors proved important, since the coastal location has heavy summer fog and sandy subsoils. They learned the layout and operation of the automatic sprinkler system on day one.

The team sampled water distribution by placing collection cans in a 10-foot grid around the sprinklers on the large course. Then the sprinklers were turned on for a measured period of time. The depth of water in the cans indicated the average amounts of water reaching the turf in each sector. Areas were identified that best represented the tees, fairways and greens on the 18-hole course, and the coverage by the three irrigation sub-systems were determined.

Data from the samples were entered into a computer which analyzed the distribution of water. At Sharp Park, the uniformities of the sampled distributions were found to be as low as 14 percent, with an average uniformity of 50 percent, for six sites evaluated. The distributions were also plotted by laptop computer in three dimensions, providing an interesting and useful visual display for the course staff.

Other factors evaluated included irrigation scheduling, plant materials used, and site conditions. Based on the findings during the field work, Dunkle was able to suggest a few improvements for the irrigation system in



Bob and Linda Dunkle (left) meet with course supervisor John Farley to arrange the day's work. Urban Team Leader Lisa Holkholt (right) helps coordinate the assistance.

his trip report. Suggestions included placement and types of sprinkler heads, soil drainage, and specific inspections for the system components. Dunkle also provided many technical references to help the client make the most of available staff and resources.

The improvements will quickly lower water and energy costs for the 50-year old golf course. Eventually, improvements in the quality of the turf will also become evident. In the past, uneven irrigation has created areas of excessively wet or dry soil, and caused turf to become more susceptible to fungus.

Urban Conservationist **Emmett Cartier** assisted in part of the field work to prepare for future applications, since irrigated turf management is so extensive and so important to water conservation in the city. Already, due to the immediately successful results at Sharp Park, other golf courses have been identified as needing irrigation water management. Training and technology transfer will be arranged with the Recreation and Park Department.

The same measurement and analysis techniques will be used in a follow-up evaluation at Sharp Park. Superintendent Farley was very pleased with the effort, telling his staff, "These guys did it right."

If you Can't Move the River Move the House!

By Kate Simpson, Information/Education Technician, Weaverville FO

In a project that is the first of its kind for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, a home was moved back from the edge of the Trinity River, which had eroded 170 feet of adjacent river bank during the heavy rains of 1997 and 1998.

The standard practice in this situation has been to put large rock along the river bank to protect the home and prevent further erosion. Because the Trinity River is designated wild and scenic, however, armoring its banks with rock is inconsistent with the Army Corps of Engineers' river-management policy. It is also inconsistent with ongoing efforts of the Trinity River Restoration Program. Physically moving the home back from the river along with a bioengineering component to minimize erosion along the river was the best alternative in the long run because it was the most cost effective and environmentally sound solution. The bioengineering component along 400 feet of riverbank consists of revegetation and restoration of the riparian plant community.

Trinity County, the local sponsor, was assisted by the State Office of Emergency Services, who contributed 75 percent of the county's matching funds. **Arnold Whitridge**, a river project specialist for the county, commended NRCS for showing "amazing bureaucratic initiative." The structure was set on its new foundation on September 25, and the contractor has since restored the home's former condition.

This is a new approach and was viewed as a pilot project by NRCS. Based on the success of the project, many are hopeful that this measure will be considered a viable alternative for homeowners in the future.



Moving the structure to protect it from the eroding river bank was the best alternative in the long run. Shown clockwise from upper left: the house placed on wheels for moving, being towed to the new site, and at rest on its new foundation.



SOIL TOUR RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

By Terry Cook, Soil Consultant and former SCS Soil Scientist

NRCSS and the Professional Soil Scientists Association of California (PSSAC) sponsored the International Committee Meeting for Anthropogenic Soils (ICOMANTH) in California held September 21-October 1, 1998. The workshop started in Las Vegas, NV and ended in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA. Soil Consultant and former Forest Service Soil Scientist **Roger Poff** and I worked with PSSAC to coordinate all local arrangements and registration for the meeting.

Poff and I played a leading role in determining about 30 sites for the field tour and assembled all materials for the field guidebook prepared by those responsible for each field stop. We spent nearly 1,800 hours in preparation for this workshop and traveled almost 9,000 miles in logistical planning for hotels, meeting rooms, meals, transportation, field sites, and in describing and sampling soils for lab analysis. Over 920 hours of volunteer time was donated by them to make sure PSSAC's reputation was upheld.

The workshop was an outstanding success. Everything from the selection of hotels, meals, and transportation to the variety and quality of technical sessions and field sites received favorable comments. Forty-seven participants represented the states of California, Nevada, Nebraska, Maryland, New York, Florida, North Dakota, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Oregon, and from Washington, DC. Seven participants were from Russia, China, Germany, and Slovakia. PSSAC received national and international exposure and recognition as sponsors of the workshop.

Numerous papers and poster papers were given on a wide variety of anthropogenic soil conditions, proposed classification systems, and alternatives throughout the U. S. and in the four international countries. In addition, all participants were assigned to one of four work groups that were given specific objectives to accomplish during the workshop. The work groups reported their findings and recommendations at the closing technical session.

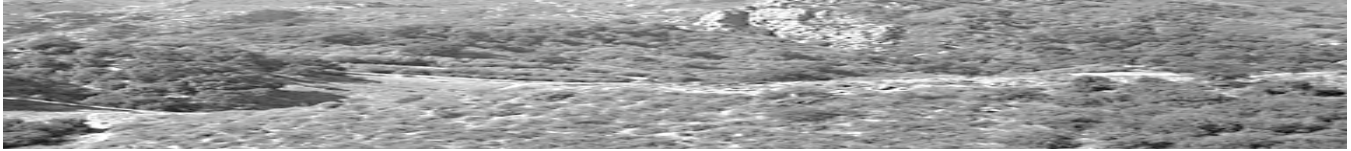
The exposure of PSSAC and its purpose as a professional association can not be understated. Other states have already asked for information on how to establish MOUs with NRCS, establish state soils, and collaborate with public and private agencies. PSSAC was mentioned on television programs, radio announcements, and in several newspaper articles. The consensus of all participants and others involved was that this workshop on anthropogenic soils increased the importance of soils modified by human activities. This initial workshop has set the standard for all remaining workshops to be held concerning anthropogenic soils.

Special recognition is also deserved for all those who gave extra time and energy in organizing field stops and materials for the field tour guidebook. These include **Douglas Merkler, Ed Russell, Jim Regal, Kerry Arroues, Kim Chang, Mario Valverde, Wayne Sheldon, Ken Oster, Lisa Hokholt**, and of course, **Eric Vinson** as MO leader and State Soil Scientist. These are but a few of all the county, state, and federal government employees, private companies, and farmers who assisted in making this a great workshop.



*Shown above, soil experts from around the world who participated in the anthropogenic soil tour last fall. Top left, NRCS Soil Scientist **Bob Arhens**, from the National Soil Survey Center, leads a lively discussion on soil taxonomy.*

SOIL SURVEYS SAVE LIVES!



By

Alan Wasner, Soil Survey Project Leader CPSS/SC

The soil survey of the Santa Monica Mountains covers a rugged area stretching from the Hollywood sign west to the Oxnard plain. This area is comprised of a unit of the National Park system as well as many State Parks and Beaches.

Last fall I was working with the Chief of Resources of the State Parks, **Suzanne Goode**, and a well known local archeologist, **Dr. Chester King**, in Sycamore Canyon State Park. Unexpectedly, through a lucky twist of fate, we had the opportunity to assist a citizen in distress.

Having driven up a hiking and mountain biking trail deep into the rugged Santa Monica Mountains, we were in an area not frequented by many people. Suddenly, we came upon a 62-year old woman who had gone over the handle bars of her mountain bike and landed on her face. The woman had a fractured hip, injuries to her arms and face, and unknown to us at the time, severe neurological injuries as well. Although she had been wearing a protective helmet, the unfortunate rider still

had serious head injuries. She evidently had been there for some time, long enough for the blood to have dried on her face.

Dr. King stayed with the injured cyclist while Suzanne and I raced back out of the park, crossing eight or nine streams in four wheel drive, to the park kiosk. Our cell phones would not work in the canyon, but Supervisory Park Ranger, **Frank Padilla, Jr.**, heard our distress call from the radio at the kiosk. In less than 30 minutes there was a medical evacuation helicopter and several park rangers on the scene. Their response was nothing short of amazing.

The victim was so severely injured that the hospital in Ventura County was obliged to transfer her to UCLA for specialized assistance. She was in the hospital for months.

Except for the soil survey, we would not have been there to find the injured woman that day. The victim has thanked all of us, as in her mind we saved her life. So one could say, with a little cheek, that "Soil surveys save lives!"

Civil Rights Awards



During the All Employee Meeting held in San Diego in January, **Barbara Ammon** (shown left with State Conservationist **Jeff Vonk**) and the Harmony Workshop Planning Team (shown right) received National Civil Rights Awards for their dedication and hard work over the past year. The Team Award went to the planning team for organizing California's first Harmony Workshop and ensuring that it would be a high quality and worthwhile training session. Ammon received the Individual Award for her outstanding success in working with volunteers and the Tehama County Job Training Center. **Congratulations!**



FIRE SAFETY

in the Yuba Watershed

By
Mike House, Editorial Assistant

Approximately 60 people were on hand last fall for an **EQIP-funded tour** held to showcase work done by NRCS, Yuba County RCD, and other members of the Yuba County Watershed Protection Firesafe Council. Demonstrations showed hand clearing of timber, underburning (alone and with goat follow-up), biomass thinning, and mechanical fuel treatment with "The Masticator." Discussions were conducted on funding available through the recently approved YWFPC Proposition 204 grant request and, at specific sites, on various treatment choices regarding soil erosion, wildland clearing, and grazing.



Paul Violett, a forester with Soper-Wheeler Co., shows the remedial fuel treatment at Hansonville Hill after a near-total clearcut in 1962. They planted conifers following blade scarification, but many other seeds such as manzanita, *ceanothus*, *rhys diveriloba*, and berries germinated also. To minimize fire danger, they used a chipper to control biomass, piled brush for an underburn, then finally hired goats! Two hundred goats were used on 20 acres for several weeks. They don't like to eat mature manzanita, though.



Left to right in foreground: **Ernie Paschke**, NRCS district conservationist, Yuba City FO; **Glenn Nader**, Cooperative Extension agent, Yuba County; a concerned local landowner, and **Paul Violett**, Soper-Wheeler Co. forester, discuss the fire hazards of the Brownsville Airport and nearby homes. Located in the middle of a 'fire chimney,' a narrow area between two ridges which allows forest fires to move quickly, the airport has suffered several burns. The new \$1.2 million Prop 204 grant will cost-share reimburse land owners to clear this dangerous area and protect their homes.

Living with Fire: Helping Homeowners Understand the Value of Fuel Load Reduction

By
Madalene M. Ransom
State Economist, Watershed Planning Services

“Risk from wildfire to life, property, natural resources, and firefighter safety is increasing”

—California Fire Plan (March 1996, p.4)

In response to a request from District Conservationist **Cliff Heitz**, in the Auburn Field Office, I developed a tool which helps landowners understand the value of fuel load reduction on their residential properties. The tool is named RORGEN, Rate Of Return GENerator. It is an Excel spreadsheet. RORGEN treats the cost of fuel load reduction practices as an investment and estimates the rate of return this investment earns.

The CDF is using RORGEN in its training program in order to help firefighters become more empathetic of the cost side of fuel load reduction and more able to communicate the benefits in words that homeowners use. The Office of Emergency Services is considering RORGEN as a source of benefit data for its evaluation of fire management methods. Homeowners have been interviewed with RORGEN at home & garden shows, spring festivals, a Fire Safe Fair, and a County Fair. Homeowners thought that the set of questions was useful in reminding them or making them aware of the fire protection gap they currently have on their own properties. Supplying the numbers themselves, homeowners are more able to visualize the possibilities.

Actions Needed to Use RORGEN in the Field

RORGEN is appropriate for residential parcels large enough to be defensible regardless of the fuel load of adjacent properties. For example, in two communities the minimal parcel size is two acres. If your parcel sizes are large enough to be defensible by themselves, then RORGEN is appropriate.

Working with District Conservationist **Ken Weaver**, in Susanville to adapt RORGEN to his community, we learned there are five steps:

(1) Create Fire Assumptions. Work with local fire professionals to create fire assumptions which portray the effect of fuel load reduction on the survivability of a house during a wildfire. This would take about one NRCS field staff day.

(2) Create Cost Assumptions. Work with local experts to estimate the per acre costs of fuel load reduction practices. This would take about one NRCS field staff day.

(3) Check the Types of Benefits. Add new fuel load reduction benefits which are important to the local community. For example, some communities have unusually expensive permitting costs for rebuilding after a fire. Such a community might include the permit savings as a benefit of the home surviving. This could take about one NRCS field staff day.

(4) Test the modified RORGEN with local fire fighters and other professionals who understand fuel load reduction in that local community. The objectives are to check RORGEN's competence and to build professional support within the community for using RORGEN. This would take about one field staff day.

(5) Assemble a volunteer group to learn RORGEN and to interview homeowners. This could take about three field office staff days.

Conclusion

RORGEN is an NRCS product that field staff can bring to conservation partners in a joint effort to live wisely with fire in California. CDF expects increasing fire damage in the future. RORGEN can help minimize that damage.

More information on this topic can be found in *California Fire Plan*, March 1996. You can contact State Economist **Madalene Ransom** at 530-792-5670.

Tahoe RCD Takes the Lead on Backyard Conservation Drive

*By Aleta Zak
EQIP Education Communication Coordinator, SO*

Say you just bought a house up at Lake Tahoe, and it has a completely bare yard. You're from the Bay Area. Where would you go to find information on landscaping techniques, setting up an irrigation system, and the best plants for the local climate?

You'd go straight to the Tahoe Resource Conservation District's Backyard Conservation Program. Project Coordinator **Genah Murphy**, working with local and regional conservation groups and agencies, has compiled a wealth of public information material that is available free for the asking. She organizes educational workshops for groups and agencies, and she gives one-on-one assistance through home site visits.

"Our goal is to make Backyard Conservation techniques available for all interested Lake Tahoe residents—one yard at a time. And we are reaching them," says Murphy. "We just had 50 people show up at a block party recently. The response has been fantastic! And it's all voluntary cooperation by the property owners."

This highly successful project is supported by a partnership that includes NRCS, the South Tahoe Public Utility District, the Kingsbury General Improvement District, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, the Cooperating Agencies of Tahoe Regreen, and the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Building on the nationwide Backyard Conservation Starter Kits produced by NRCS and NACD, the Tahoe RCD started its program in spring 1998 with an \$8,000 grant from the California Department of Conservation (DOC). In-kind and cash donations from the partners came soon after. "We're now the leader in the national Backyard Conservation Program," says Tahoe RCD Administrative Assistant **Doug Witt**, who wrote the DOC grant. "And we plan to expand the program next year into other areas, like the North Shore. The road is just endless."

In addition to the plant lists, water conservation tips, and a directory of nurseries, Tahoe RCD also gives out packets of native wildflower seeds. The South Tahoe PUD donated funds for 1,000 packets of seeds, and the Tahoe RCD paid for an additional supply. On each packet is a sticker with the motto "GO Native!" and a toll-free phone to call for more information. They include California Poppy, Blanketflower, Rocky Mountain Penstemon, Blue Flax, and Tidy Tips, enough seed to cover 100 square feet.

"Good media coverage throughout the summer helped to generate hundreds of phone calls from interested property owners," said Murphy. NRCS printed 22,000 informational flyers that were mailed with utility bills from South Tahoe PUD and the Kingsbury Improvement District in Stateline, Nevada. She's also planning a program for local school teachers to get back into the classroom.

The program has helped soften the blow of at least one regulation that Tahoe homeowners will have to comply with during the next dozen years, according to Murphy. This involves using best management practices (BMPs) like installing drip line trenches to catch melting snow from roofs. These are erosion control measures established by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The Backyard Conservation Program connects residents with the resources they need to set up a drip line trench system or other BMPs on their property. "Homeowners feel better about it if it's a voluntary thing," said Murphy.

For more information on the Tahoe RCD's Backyard Conservation program, contact the district at 1-800-541-5654.



He Keeps Them Running!

By
Kate Simpson, NRCS Weaverville

Weaverville, CA — The engines are purring efficiently on the vehicles of the Field Office in Weaverville, thanks to the committed attention of an Earth Team volunteer there, who is also a certified mechanic.

Greg Charnley (*wearing cap in photo*) was given a plaque, a sweatshirt and an Earth Team patch for the work and many hours that he devotes to the seven office vehicles. Charnley ensures that the rigs get regular service, are running well, and have any problems fixed so the field crew does not have to worry when they take off for the backroads of the Trinity Alps area.

This enthusiastic volunteer also maintains good relationships with the local vendors, and recently



procured a good-will warranty repair of \$400 on a vehicle that had just passed its warranty period, saving the Government that amount. The regular checkups he does on the vehicles and mechanical know-how keep the rigs in excellent shape and ward off many problems. From April through June, Greg has spent 225 hours on his duties as Maintenance Coordinator for the Field Office. His award is well deserved.

CARCD Annual Conference

By *Dave Sanden, Writer/Editor, SO*

"This year's meeting was an outstanding success," said CARCD Executive Director **Tom Wehri** referring to the CARCD conference held last fall in Palm Springs.

More than 200 CARCD members and supporters, including several NRCS employees, journeyed to Palm Springs in November to participate in the conference. Attendees enjoyed fascinating speakers, participated in panel discussions and workshops, and shared conservation ideas and resources.

Those arriving early had an opportunity to tour many water-efficient projects in the Palm Springs area or to sight see at the top of Mt. San Jacinto the day before the conference officially began.

Among the prominent conference speakers was Senator **David G. Kelly**, who hails from the Palm Springs area and now heads the natural resource committee for the California Senate.



*CARCD President **Donna Thomas** presents State Conservationist **Jeff Vonk** with the Associate Member Award for partners supporting CCP News at the CARDC conference held in Palm Springs last November.*

New Service Center Opens in Alturas

By Kate Simpson

Despite stormy weather, a large crowd gathered in Alturas on January 26th to celebrate the opening of the new service center with speeches, a ribbon cutting, and an open house with refreshments. FSA, NRCS and RD moved into the vacant west wing of the U.S. Forest Service building in Alturas, making this a real USDA center.



Shown above from right to left, speakers at the service center opening included Jeff vonk, Celeste Cantu, and Chris Lauppe.

Mark Steffek emceed the program.

Speakers included **Jeff Vonk**, NRCS State Conservationist, **Celeste Contu**, new Director of Rural Development, and **Chris Lauppe**, FSA Executive Director representing the state and local FSA. A welcome was given by **Wayne Chandler** of the Forest Service, who said that col-location is the right thing to do. The mayor of Alturas spoke, as did **Patricia Cantrell** of the Alturas Board of Supervisors, who also read a congratulations letter sent from Congressman **Wally Herger**. Local agency presenters were **Sandy Higa**, the new District Conservationist for NRCS, Chris Lauppe of FSA and **Mike Colbert**, RD Manager.

Cooperation seems to be the order of the day among all the agencies occupying the building, and the sharing of resources creates efficiency. "One-stop shopping" for USDA clients is another advantage of this convergence.

Soil Centennial Events

By Susan Southard, Soil Data Quality Specialist, SO

There are many new publications and events to celebrate the Centennial of Soil Survey. Many of these events can be found on the NRCS' Soil Division web page at <http://www.statlab.iastate.edu/soils/soildiv/>.

A few of these activities include:

- Promotional products offered through the National Association of Conservation Districts.
- Designation of State Soils. So far, 47 states have selected state soils, many adopted through state legislation.
- A soil calendar printed collaboratively by the NRCS and the Soil Science Society.
- The April opening of a 14,000 sq. ft. soils exhibit at the Chicago Museum.
- Publication of a book on the history of the soil survey, coordinated by Doug Helms, NRCS National Historian.

The American Geological Institute (AGI) has just released a new book and poster Sustaining our Soils and Society as part of its Environmental Awareness Series. It is a non-technical book about soils. To order or read more about it go to http://www.earthsciweek.org/ESWp_Press_Release_99_enviroBook.html

These are just a few highlights of the Soil Survey Centennial. We hope this celebration year helps everyone become a little more aware soils and the soil survey program.

Personnel Notes . . .

Well I think the Human Resources staff is finally settling into our spot in the new building. We are pleased with the design of our equipment and space. Believe it or not, we actually are more organized and feeling efficient! Hope it lasts!

As to other changes, the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, better known as FEGLI has made some changes that will possibly impact you. An open season, effective April 1, 1999 through May 31, 1999, will allow you to make changes to Option C of your coverage. FEGLI will now allow up to five times the current amount available for spouse and eligible child coverage. Eligible coverage will also include foster children. Portability of the coverage has also changed for you LUCKY FEW otherwise known as retirees, Option B coverage will allow you to continue coverage on an unreduced basis by continuing to

pay premiums. Before you get too excited these changes won't be effective until January 2000.

You can check out the FEGLI web site (www.opm.gov/insure/life) if you want to find out more of the specifics.

Presentations were made by Ruth Ann Reed and Kathy Wold along with the folks from FSA and RD to introduce the Pass/Fail Performance Management System. Satellite training is also being provided and tapes are available.

It was great to be able to put names to faces at the All Employees Meeting, and we all enjoyed the weather, but back to the phones and e-mail! We're here to help!

The Human Resources Staff

PERSONNEL CHANGES

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>DATE</u>
V. Backlund	Hydr Engr	Retirement	GS-12	Water Rec	12-31-98
A. Ushijima	SCT	Resignation	GS-4	Livermore	12-6-98
P. Vu	Ag Engr	Career Promo	GS-11	Salinas FO	12-22-98
S. Kem	Soil Con Aid	Expire Appt	GS-3	Fresno AO	12-31-98
L. Hoffman	Soil Consvst	Conv. CC/Promo	GS-7	Salinas FO	1-3-99
M. Collins	Soil Consvst	Reassignment	GS-7	Modesto	1-3-99
J. Back	Computer Asst.	STEP Appt.	GS-5	IRM	
J. Nielsen	Personnel Asst.	Repromotion	GS-7	Human Resources	2-14-99
K. Sosa	Soil Consv Tech	Retirement	GS-8	Placerville	12-31-99
R. Clary	Computer Spec.	Retirement	GS-11	Petaluma	1-2-99
R. Bickel	Resource Con.	Promotion	GS-12	Riverside	1-17-99
P. Lausten	Visual Info Sp.	STEP Appt.	GS-4	Public Affairs	1-31-99
J. Earle	ST TR Admin	SCEP Appt.	GS-4	Trinity RC&D	1-17-99
M. Mallowney	ST. Trnee PA	Resignation	GS-5	Public Aff.	1-14-99
J. Preciado	ST Trainee/Eng	Conv. To SCEP	GS-4	Engineering	1-3-99
G. Samulski	Civ. Engr Tech	Reassign	GS-9	Somis	1-3-99
D. Bell	Mgmt Analyst	Retirement	GS-9	Red Bluff FO	2-3-99
J. Snyder	Soil Consvst	Career Promo	GS-11	Colusa	1-17-99
J. Lau	Pub. Aff.	Spec Detail	GS-7	Pub. Affairs	1-17-99

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

in California

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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